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SUBJECT: ALLEGED ASSASSINATION ATTEMPT AGAINST LAM AKOL DEBUNKED
11. (SBU) An accidental encounter between cattle-rustlers and a motorcade convoy belonging to former Sudanese Foreign Minister Lam Akol has sparked a press battle of conspiracy theories and alleged

assassination plots. Media spin to date has cleaved along "true SPLM" and "former SPLM" lines, with ousted party member (and former GNU minister) Telar Deng actively asserting an attempt was made on Lam Akol's life. No such theory has been borne out as a result of NISS, UNMIS, or SPLA inquiries to date, although the story continues to get media play given its "convenient fit" with the internal politics of Upper Nile State. SPLM leaders dismiss any characterization of the incident as an "attack," and posit this is nothing more than Akol trying to generate the state's sympathy vote.

12. (SBU) Akol, a rival of SPLM Secretary General Pagan Amum an "NCP turncoat" fighting for his political life within the SPLM, skipped the Interim Political Bureau meeting in Juba to personally campaign for the selection of delegates representing his wing of the party during Boma-level and county-level SPLM congresses in Upper Nile state this past weekend. His multi-car convoy came under fire as it traveled southeast from Malakal to Mamoajak, although it appears that Akol was not traveling with the convoy when it was attacked. Two members of the traveling party were killed instantly and a third succumbed to his wounds one day later. The convoy was carrying delegates loyal to Lam Akol to county-level party congresses outside of the state capital. Both the NISS and the SPLA had officers in the convoy, and NISS/Juba and the SPLA later confirmed to ConGen staff that they lost officers during the attack.

13. (SBU) agamAmum told"CgnGe stagv"Marcl`24 |hatDam A{ol*rexxrxdhy tohQSQLB`Eaff,of"3d`fh!OymcQgg'Afk%4| :M QaqxjxQQQkn\$4lsjw.kb)r`hlQ.Yi,n(f attempts" to warn Akol's staffers about "large numbers of cattle and men on the road ahead, and the potential dangers." NISS/Juba told ConGen staff on March 25 that they were skeptical of the assassination claim, noting that the former minister's travel schedule "would not have been something well known." UNMIS officials in Malakal, to include UN DSS, told ConGen PolOff they believe the incident was "purely accidental."

14. (SBU) Strong skepticism by observers and the SPLM alike has not dampened Akol's or Telar Deng's enthusiasm for fueling sensational reports. Akol has since claimed publicly that he was in the car, and has named Amum and Upper Nile author and GNU Council of States member Peter Aduok Nyaba as complicit in the attack. Nyaba laughed when queried about the claim, "Lam is orchestrating his political death on his own, why would I participate in his physical one?" Upper Nile State will send 71 delegates to the SPLM National Convention in May, 40 of which will be chosen through balloting during county-level congresses. Pagan Amum told ConGen staff March 25 that Akol had failed to place any of his faction's adherents into county-level Chairman slots. Akol's delegates subsequently walked out of three different county conventions when their attempts failed.

15. (SBU) Comment: Lam Akol has been conspiring and successfully maneuvering divisions within the Shilluk Kingdom in Upper Nile state since his ouster from Khartoum politics. The former minister's setbacks during this past weekend's county-level congresses, however, appear to have been mitigated by a precipitous, accidental encounter with cattle rustlers that he will undoubtedly continue to play up through the May SPLM National Convention.

FERNANDEZ